



## *Manitoba Keewatinowî Okimakanak Inc.*

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## **Media Release**

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## **For Immediate Release**

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### **MKO Grand Chief alarmed that breach of protocols by school officials and university personnel place Southeast Collegiate students at risk of Hepatitis and HIV**

WINNIPEG, MB – Manitoba Keewatinowî Okimakanak Inc. Grand Chief David Harper expressed alarm today regarding the apparent breaches of parental consent policies and medical protocols for the testing of blood which resulted in a number of First Nation students at Southeast Collegiate being placed at risk of exposure to hepatitis and HIV. “The well-being of all the students and families involved in this incident are of paramount concern to me. At the heart of the matter, prior written parental consent should have been required by the school before permitting the students to participate in any medical testing,” said Grand Chief Harper.

On Friday May 4, 2012 Southeast Collegiate hosted a “Health and Wellness Day” that included physicians providing scientific evidence of diabetes and interactive booths focusing on diabetes assessment risk, health practices, and nutrition. Approximately 80 students were tested for diabetes by a University of Manitoba professor using a Lancet Device to demonstrate how diabetics test their blood to monitor blood glucose levels. The blood tests were conducted without the parental consent of the underage Southeast Collegiate students and without following established medical protocols. The affected students and parents are now anxiously awaiting the results of two rounds of follow-up tests by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority over the next six months, which tests require the prior written consent of parents for students under 18.

Manto Sipi Cree Nation Chief Michael Yellowback stated, “the circumstances (of the May 4, 2012 diabetes tests) are a most serious breach of established protocols in respect of the requirements for prior parental consent, in respect of the expectations of parents that such protocols will be respected and absolutely adhered to and in respect of the procedures to guard against the transmission of viral disease when administering tests involving the sampling of blood. In addition to this breach of established protocols for the protection of children and persons undergoing blood testing, if not the ethical and legal obligations of the University of Manitoba and Southeast Collegiate, the affected children have been potentially exposed to at least three very serious viral illnesses, being hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and the human immunodeficiency virus. While the risk of a student contracting an infection is described by the University of Manitoba as ‘exceptionally unlikely’ and by the WRHA as ‘very low’ and ‘minimal’, the risk is not zero.” Chief Michael Yellowback is a parent of an affected student.

For more information or to arrange interviews with Grand Chief David Harper, please contact Brennan Manoakeesick, Assistant to MKO Grand Chief David Harper, at 204.795.0449.